

John Ashcroft — The Best Man For the Job

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The following are recent quotes on President Bush's nomination of Senator John Ashcroft for the office of U.S. Attorney General. (Note: no version of this paper was issued on January 24.)

"I'm going to vote yes. I assume there's nothing more to learn. The responses didn't provide reasons for me not to support him. I think the president ought to have wide latitude."

(Democrat Senator Byron Dorgan, The Hill, 1/24/01)

"The Senate Judiciary Committee will soon vote on the confirmation of former Sen. John Ashcroft to be attorney general. In all likelihood, the full Senate will vote to confirm Mr. Ashcroft. But Mr. Ashcroft deserved better.

"That is, when Mr. Ashcroft becomes the next attorney general of the United States, he will bring an abiding dedication to law and order to a department that has been corrupted into an institutional accomplice in Clintonian politicking and scandal control. ...

"He has been caricatured by Senate Democrats, special interest groups and the media elite as one blinded by his faith to law and reason. He has been branded an unregenerate racist — or 'racially insensitive,' to use the phrase of choice — and an 'anti-choice' homophobe. This big smear wasn't easy. There were setbacks, as when Mr. Ashcroft's long lost address to Bob Jones University, breathlessly awaited by opponents seeking a smoking gun — or maybe a smoking Bible — proved to be utterly non-incendiary. And, of course, Mr. Ashcroft's actual record as a senator, governor and state attorney general kept getting in the way (although that never stopped the explosive garble of Sen. Ted Kennedy).

"To the end, Mr. Ashcroft's adversaries seemed to know he was always just out of range; they just tried to wound him as grievously as they could. Even so, Mr. Ashcroft will certainly be confirmed to serve his nation once again, this time as attorney general. ..."

(The Washington Times, Editorial, 1/24/01)

"Senator Tom Daschle, the Democratic leader in the Senate, told President Bush today that he need not worry about getting confirmation for his cabinet choices, including John Ashcroft, the embattled nominee for attorney general, Mr. Bush's spokesman told reporters.

"'You will not be denied your choice on nominees,' Ari Fleischer quoted Mr. Daschle as telling the president in a White House meeting, an account that Mr. Daschle's office did not dispute.

"Few people, Democrat or Republican, would quarrel seriously with that assessment of how the Ashcroft nomination will end, probably in little more than a week. ...

(Neil A. Lewis, The New York Times, 1/25/01)

"Attorney general-designate John Ashcroft is being attacked, among other things, for remarks in an interview he gave to Southern Partisan magazine. ...

"Those circulating it suggest that Mr. Ashcroft was praising the Confederate cause, including slavery. But in context he was praising the antislavery principles of America's Founding Fathers. I should know, because he was talking about my book.

"Mr. Ashcroft believes in the original definition of equality and liberty — that all human beings deserve to be free and to keep the property they earn with their own hands, rather than have it taken away by a government that pretends to know better than they do what to do with that property.

"In the new Bush administration, with Mr. Ashcroft as attorney general, perhaps America has a chance to go back to the genuine principles of the Founding Fathers without trying to come up with 'new and higher definitions' of them, as has been the habit of the past eight years."

(Thomas G. West, The Washington Times, 1/24/01)

"... Yet many of the same people who have complained about 'partisan bickering' and the 'politics of personal destruction' were themselves full-throated participants in the high-volume attacks on Sen. John Ashcroft, President Bush's nominee for attorney general.

"... (S)ome of the attacks on Ashcroft clearly went over the line, such as not-so-subtle accusations of racism. ..."

(Jay Ambrose, Scripps Howard News Service, 1/24/01)

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